


**1401 Mt. Royal Avenue • Baltimore, MD 21217-4245**  
 (410) 225-9400 • (410) 225-9409 TDD for Deaf • Fax: (410) 225-3936  
*(formerly the  RP Foundation Fighting Blindness)*

Page Two  
Dr. Margaret Pfanstiehl  
December 27, 1994


As this becomes more and more frustrating, people stop going out to the movies, finding alternative activities, many of which are adapted for someone who has a vision loss.

When those who are visually impaired or blind cease to go to the movies, so do their friends and family members. However, many of these same individuals do enjoy videotapes and public television shows that are audio described, even though they are small in number.

Providing audio description for first run movies which appear in neighborhood theaters would allow those who are visually impaired or blind to fully enjoy the variety of entertainment that is provided by the motion picture industry. The visual components of a film so often play a significant role in relaying the story - it would be wonderful to have those components available to those without sight.

The Foundation Fighting Blindness is glad to support the efforts of The Metropolitan Washington Ear as they promote audio description within the Motion Picture Association of America. Please keep me apprised of your progress and especially of the date planned for meeting with MPAA representatives in January, 1995.

Sincerely,

  
Robert M. Gray  
Executive Director



## Prevention of Blindness Society of the Metropolitan Area

December 23 1994

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Dr. Arnold B. Simonse  
*Executive Director*

Margaret and Cody Pfanstiehl  
The Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc.  
35 University Blvd., East  
Silver Spring MD 20901

Dear Margaret and Cody:

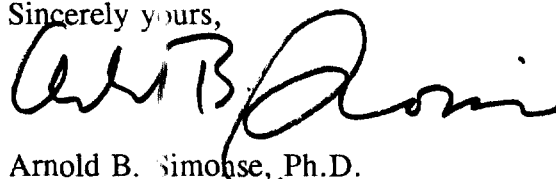
The Prevention of Blindness Society of the Metropolitan Area applauds your efforts to fill the gap in the motion picture industry which effectively denies the visually impaired the right to the enjoyment of so many fine films. Media has shown its concern and good will through their wonderful efforts at closed-captioning which allows the hearing impaired full participation in modern life. Now, hopefully, the visually impaired will receive the same access.

The Prevention of Blindness Society works with literally thousands of persons here in the Washington area who are facing impaired vision--most for the first time in their lives. Along with the natural fear of blindness, comes the even greater fear of losing independence and becoming persons out of the mainstream. Relegated to sitting in the corner. It is essential that all of us do whatever is necessary to insure that the visually impaired and blind have access to as much of life as possible.

The technical success of audio description has been proven, along with its economic advantages. I am sure that the film industry will work actively with you to include audio description in its productions. It would prove to be another "Oscar" for their community concern.

The Prevention of Blindness Society supports your efforts in this and will be glad to do whatever is asked to insure full participation of all of our community in everyday life.

Sincerely yours,



Arnold B. Simonse, Ph.D.

1775 Church Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20036 • (202) 234-1010 • FAX (202) 234-1020

Member: THE AMERICAN EYE ASSOCIATION





# The National Council on the Aging, Inc.

409 Third Street SW • Washington, DC 20024 • Tel. (202) 479-1200 • TDD (202) 479-6674 • Fax (202) 479-0735

January 4, 1995

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Margaret Rockwell Pfanstiehl, Ed.D.  
Founder and President  
The Metropolitan Washington Ear  
35 University Boulevard East  
Silver Spring, MD 20901  
**BY FAX: 301-593-7398**

Dear Dr. Pfanstiehl:

It is with a great deal of pleasure that The National Council on the Aging endorses your campaign to add narrative descriptions on films and television for the visually impaired.

I have known of the work of the Metropolitan Washington Ear for a number of years since my wife has been a volunteer reader on your special radio station.

There is no question that seniors who are visually impaired would benefit greatly from the availability of a descriptive narration which is technically feasible. We are glad to join the American Council of the Blind and the American Foundation for the Blind as well as our colleagues at the American Association of Retired Persons in endorsing this campaign.

Sincerely,

Dr. Daniel Thursz  
President

DT/td

cc: Margot Phillips



# National Association for Visually Handicapped

*...ally seeing*

22 West 21st Street • New York, New York 10010 • Telephone (212) 889-3141

Mrs. Lorraine H. Marchi  
FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 15, 1994

Margaret Rockwell Pfanstiehl, Ed.D., President  
The Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc.  
35 University Boulevard, East  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

Dear Dr. Pfanstiehl:

National Association for Visually Handicapped is privileged to participate in your vital campaign calling upon the Motion Picture Association of America to make its product truly accessible to people who do not have the benefit of full vision.

NAVH is the only voluntary national health agency which serves solely the partially seeing. Recent Bureau of Census statistics indicate that more than two-thirds of all people with low vision are over age 65. It is further estimated that in 1995 there will be 33.9 million Americans in that age category--a number that will increase with the "graying of America." Infants born with Aids or addicted to crack cocaine present multiple disabilities, including visual handicaps, and will be adding further to the number of Americans with impaired vision.

At its most recent bi-monthly "Seniors Discussion Group," NAVH surveyed attendees regarding changes which would be most welcome in the lives of visually impaired persons. Second only to improving travel accommodations was the desire to have increased access to visual entertainment and education media.

Low vision young adults are by no means less threatened by lack of access. Employable persons with visual impairment are very concerned about "universal" entry to the information highway. We invited Dr. Frank Bowe, renowned advocate for persons with disabilities, to address the issue during a "NAVH Networking Night" (an ongoing activity for young adults with low vision). Dr. Bowe stressed the importance of obtaining access for all within the rapid modernization of telecommunications. His most salient point was that input from the disabled community be made often and in a timely manner, in order to ensure "built in" accommodation.

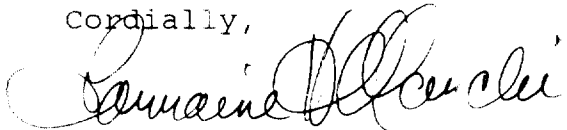
Technical capacity to deliver descriptions, on the other hand, is largely in place and can be expanded without huge expenditures. Video description already has been tested and successfully implemented. Further denial of such service to visually impaired

persons may, indeed need to be tested for violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The "Hard of Seeing" are the second largest group of the disabled in the United States. If the MPAA continues to deny descriptive services, the industry will assuredly experience a significantly negative public relations image. Because to ignore an issue which affects so many Americans is tantamount to accepting deliberate discrimination, NAVH supports, without reservation, a legislative mandate which will ensure description services be made available for film and video without further delay.

Thank you for the opportunity to join with you in your worthy crusade

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lorraine H. Marchi".

Lorraine H. Marchi  
Founder/Executive Director

LHM:ec



## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY

110 Sixteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006

January 30, 1996

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Mr. H. Scott Barrett  
President  
Domestic Video Division  
Blockbuster Entertainment Group  
One Blockbuster Plaza  
200 South Andrews Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301-1860

Dear Mr. Barrett:

The National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) endorses all efforts to make home videos accessible to millions of Americans who are visually impaired.

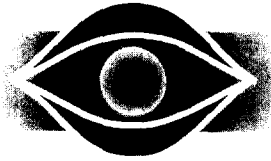
Described videos would benefit and be welcomed by the more than eleven million visually impaired Americans, and their family members and friends. For a person who has low vision or is blind, access to and rental and purchase of accessible home videos can be an important part of a successful and rewarding life in today's world. Providing this needed product is not only a good thing to do, it's also good business.

N.O.D. promotes the full people with disabilities in all aspects of life. We promote voluntary grassroots action through our network of Community Partners, which numbers more than 4,500 cities, towns and counties. Supported by our "Calling On America" campaign, these communities work to expand the participation of people with disabilities in jobs, education, religious worship, voting, and in social, cultural and recreational life.

Accessible home videos are important for increased participation of the visually impaired in the social, cultural and recreation life of our society. We strongly encourage and support Blockbuster's efforts in making accessible home videos available.

Sincerely,

Alan A. Reich  
President



# Macular Degeneration International

*Serving Persons with Juvenile and Age-Related Macular Degeneration*

January 9, 1994

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Dr. Margaret Pfanstiehl  
The Metropolitan Washington Ear  
426 Branch Drive  
Silver Springs, MD 20901

Dear Dr Pfanstiehl,

We are writing to let you know that our organization would like to join in the coalition effort to advocate on behalf of persons who are blind or visually impaired as it relates to descriptive video services. Access to this media, whether it be movies or television is so important in the informational needs and the cultural lives of millions of persons in this category

As a person who has been legally blind since my 20's (over 20 years), I have felt the need in so many countless situations in finding a way to access a story line, in following details in a documentary or in so many other details in a movie or show. Having a sister who is deaf, I watched her grow up almost her entire life watching closed captioned television. I often wondered about this lack of equality in equal access, and will do all I can to see that the visually impaired are offered the same access as it should be

On behalf of over one thousand members and growing in our new organization, as well as over two million persons in the U.S. with macular degeneration (the largest single cause of vision impairing diseases in persons over 65 years of age), we believe strongly in any and all descriptive video services for our population and support your efforts in this advocacy coalition - count us in !!

With warmest personal regards,

Thomas B. Perski, M.A.  
Executive Director

Main office:  
2968 W. Ina Road #106  
Tucson, AZ 85741  
602-797-2525 Ph/Fax

Post Office Box 136  
West Chicago, IL 60186





## *Age and Youth in Action*

2025 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 821, Washington, DC 20006 (202) 466-3132 Fax (202) 466-3133

1/20/95

Margaret and Cody Pfanstiehl  
426 Branch Drive  
Silver Springs, Maryland 20901-2617

Dear Margaret,

Thank you for keeping us informed about the needs of the visually challenged. Every since our founding the Gray Panthers have had on our agenda, better media access and accountability. Today that need for better and fairer access is even more important.

With the flood of programs about to become available on television as well as the implications of the "super information highway", we can think of no greater boon for our blind and visually impaired members than restoring and improving their access to both of these. Video description as well as other technical advances must be made available.

The Gray Panthers can see no reason for the industry not to take the lead in this effort. It is both doable and economically feasible.

Please keep us informed of your efforts and let us know what we can do to help.

Sincerely,

Dixie Horning  
Executive Director

via Fax  
Hard mail



Printed on recycled paper

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Washington DC  
20001-2614



202-371-8880  
1-800-669-7079  
Fax 202-371-8258

President of Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc.  
35 University Blvd. East  
Silver Spring, MD. 20901  
Fax (301) 593-7398

Dear Dr. Pfanstiehl:

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) is very pleased to join with you and the other organizations of and for the blind in your effort as to convince the MPAA that blind Americans should have the opportunity to fully enjoy movies and videos as sighted people do through the use of Video Description. Technological advances make this possible at relatively low cost and blind Americans should receive services comparable to captioning for the deaf.

The BVA will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year and blinded veterans most of whom have experienced sudden and traumatic blindness have a great appreciation for the frustrations experienced by the blind when attempting to enjoy movies and videos when pauses in dialogue occur or when most of the action is visual. Not knowing what is happening is extremely frustrating and often discourages blind individuals from even attempting to watch or listen to the form of media entertainment. Video description has provided a break through in technology to enhance a blind persons enjoyment by lessening the frustration because during pauses in dialogue pertinent information is verbally provided by a narrator providing detail that can only be determined with vision. Television and Movies is an extremely popular form of entertainment for all Americans and the blind should not be excluded from full enjoyment of these media when technology exists at low cost to give them greater access to all that occurs on the screen.

BVA certainly endorses your efforts to enlighten MPAA regarding their moral responsibility to include video description in the movies and videos they produce. Unfortunately, the private as well as the public sector has not been responsive to the special needs of disabled Americans. It has become necessary to seek legislative remedies to these problems. We commend your advocacy efforts and look forward to lending our support in any way we can.

Very Sincerely,

  
Thomas B. Miller  
BVA Executive Director